

The Physician's BOOKSHELF



HUMAN TUMOURS SECRETING CATECHOLAMINES—Clinical and Physiological Study of the Pheochromocytomas—Henri Hermann, Correspondent de l'Institut and Professor of Physiology, and René Mornex, Associate Professor of Medicine, Faculté de Médecine, Lyon. Translated by Dr. R. Crawford. A Pergamon Press Book distributed by The Macmillan Company, New York, 1964. 207 pages (No price quoted).

The authors of this book present the reader with the benefit of long experience in the clinical and laboratory aspects of pheochromocytoma. In addition, they cover the pertinent literature well. This material is organized in the masterful fashion of a first-rate professor, giving (when possible) a unified viewpoint to facilitate understanding but at the same time acknowledging conflicting data. This viewpoint is summarized in a few lines at the beginning of each chapter, and this summary gives the reader sufficient acquaintance with the chapter to decide whether to read it for more detail.

The book is based on 507 cases of pheochromocytoma, including the authors' own series and other cases published in enough detail to be summarized according to a standard plan. At the time of writing, these 507 cases were about half of the total pheochromocytomas in the world literature. The cases are referred to repeatedly, especially in the chapters on the clinical features of the disease. The pertinent individual cases are detailed in tabular form in the discussion of the less common manifestations of pheochromocytoma: severe associated diabetes or premature coronary arteriosclerosis, asymptomatic forms, instances of tumors whose first manifestation was fatal, intraadrenal nonexpansive tumors, intrathoracic and intravesical forms, multiple tumors operated on in two stages, malignant pheochromocytomas, familial forms (with pedigrees in each instance), cases associated with von Recklinghausen's Disease, tumors developing during childhood but diagnosed in later years, and cases revealed by pregnancy. Throughout the book, the authors illustrate their points with pertinent case histories and with tables and figures based on the 507 cases.

The book is organized into the following sections: I. Clinical Features (cardiovascular manifestations, metabolic and endocrine manifestations, unusual features, anatomical distribution, association with other conditions); II. Diagnosis (clinical exam, pharmacodynamic tests, measurement of catecholamines and their metabolites, radiologic studies) and Treatment; III. Anatomical and Biological Investigation (of the tumors); and IV. Physiopathology. The sections on Clinical Features and on Diagnosis and Treatment will be of most interest to the clinician. They are also better presented and freer of speculation than are the later sections. The chapters about research on the tumors themselves are interesting, but the number of cases is relatively small, and statistical analysis of the data is lacking. The final section on Physiopathology is weak, perhaps because the authors have drawn for it primarily from the published work of others rather than from their personal studies. Portions

of this section (e.g. that on the thyroïdal effects of catecholamines) consist of a series of reports of unrelated conflicting studies. Even here, the authors have presented their interpretation, but its foundation is shaky.

We must be grateful to Dr. R. Crawford for making this excellent work available to English speaking readers. However, the translation itself is not well done. The language is unnecessarily stilted and "Latinized" suggesting that the translation was direct, with little change from the original French form. Some words which appear repeatedly were unfamiliar to this American reader, although they can be found in a medical dictionary. Examples are "semiology" (symptomatology), "polyglobulism" (polycythemia), "nycturia" (nocturnal) and "meteorism" (tympantism). Other terms seem awkward though understood: "interrogation" for "history" and "error from deficiency" for "false negative." Despite these problems, the work is quite readable, and it is well worth overcoming the problems of style in order to benefit from the content of this excellent monograph.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON DRUG SAFETY—Commission on Drug Safety; (founded by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association) L. T. Coggeshall, M.D., Chairman. Orders for this Report should be addressed to: Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, 9650 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20014. 228 pages.

As a result of the Kefauver-Harris food and drug law and subsequent regulations of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, a Commission on Drug Safety was founded by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association with a grant-in-aid in 1962. Lowell T. Coggeshall, M.D., Vice-President of the University of Chicago, was appointed chairman and was asked to appoint to the Commission individuals who were well-informed in the field of drug safety. Fourteen such persons were appointed, representing universities, the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry and the American Medical Association. The Commission held monthly meetings from September, 1962 until March, 1964, reviewing and evaluating the reports of 17 subcommittees, only 8 of which had members of the Commission as chairmen. This book is the report of the Commission.

Nearly \$1 billion is now invested annually in medical research, of which a large share is spent in creating and investigating new drugs. This has led to the introduction of many effective therapeutic agents, some of which have undesirable or dangerous side effects. Items discussed include the importance of basic animal research, not only to perform standard pharmacological and toxicological tests, but also to devise tests which will predict the hazards of teratogenic effects, effects on blood cells and bone marrow, and skin rash. Basic research must be greatly expanded to provide a broad base of fundamental knowledge necessary to anticipate and interpret drug